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SUBJECT: AFGHAN FM ABDULLAH DISCUSSES TALIBAN VIOLENCE,
US-AFGHAN PARTNERSHIP WITH GOI

REF: NEW DELHI 3746

Classified By: PolCouns Geoff Pyatt. Reasons 1.4(b,d)

[11.](#) (C) Summary: Afghan Foreign Minister Abdullah's July 3-5 visit to New Delhi was uneventful, but gave the GOI a chance to display its continued commitment to Afghan reconstruction and its determination to play a role in Central Asia through its relationships in Afghanistan. According to the Afghan Embassy, India's Foreign Minister commented favorably on the US-Afghanistan strategic partnership, but expressed concern over the risk to Indian business and aid efforts from continued Taliban violence in Afghanistan. End Summary.

[12.](#) (U) Abdullah's July 3-5 visit included calls on FM Natwar Singh and PM Manmohan Singh. Media reports of both meetings focused on Abdullah's accusations that "outside supporters" were assisting Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan, but also highlighted India's contributions to Afghan reconstruction, noting that approximately half of India's USD 500 million pledge of assistance has been disbursed. The MEA's public statement on the visit emphasized India's continued commitment to Afghan development, and thanked Afghanistan for the "constructive role" it plays in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (which India has not been able to join) and its decision to co-sponsor the G-4 framework resolution on UN Security Council expansion.

[13.](#) (C) MEA Director (Afghanistan) Namgyal told Poloff on July 5 that Abdullah's visit was "not very intense," noting that Abdullah discussed Indian involvement in reconstruction efforts as well as Afghanistan's security concerns. Abdullah was "very worried" about the increased Taliban activity in Afghanistan, but asserted that the attacks would not be able to derail the reconstruction and democratic progress Afghanistan was making, Namgyal reported. In contrast to media reports focusing on Abdullah's complaints about Pakistani supporters of the Taliban, Namgyal highlighted Abdullah's conciliatory July 4 public statements, made after his meetings with GOI officials, in which the Afghan FM commended Pakistan's efforts to crack down on extremists operating in its territory.

[14.](#) (C) Afghan Embassy Political-Economic Counselor Abdul Shooqufan echoed Namgyal's positive assessment of the meetings in a July 5 discussion with Poloff. While Abdullah did outline his concerns about Pakistani support for Taliban remnants to his GOI interlocutors, he also sought to assure the GOI that incidents of violence were few and far-between, and should not be an impediment to Indian reconstruction projects and business activities in Afghanistan, Shooqufan said. FM Natwar Singh reiterated India's commitment to reconstruction in Afghanistan, and commented favorably on the US-Afghan strategic partnership, noting that a stable and secure Afghanistan is in India's interest, and India recognizes the need for the "international community" to remain engaged in Afghanistan to ensure that outcome (Reftel).

[15.](#) (C) The two Foreign Ministers discussed preparations for the PM's planned late August visit to Kabul, to include the signing of MOUs on Indian training and assistance for Afghan workers in medicine and education, Shooqufan said. (Note: Media sources have reported that the PM's visit will take place in September to coincide with the inauguration of the Indian-constructed Afghan Parliament building. End Note) They also reviewed their efforts to convince Pakistan to allow transit of Indian goods overland to Afghanistan, with Abdullah noting that this was an area for Afghanistan to continue working. Shooqufan pointed out that persuading Pakistan would require a concerted effort by both Afghanistan and the US.

Comment

[15.](#) (C) Although early press reports seized on Abdullah's references to "outside supporters" of the Taliban, his later statements commending Pakistan's efforts to clamp down on al Qaeda and Taliban elements pleased his GOI hosts, who have toned down their own condemnations of Pakistan in order to nurture the recent warming of Indo-Pak relations. The upcoming visit of the PM to Kabul (the first in 30 years) will be a significant opportunity for India to showcase the reconstruction aid to Afghanistan of which it is very proud, and to reinforce its effort to position itself as a friend of

Afghanistan and a growing player in Central Asia. Also notable is the fact that India is continuing to press the issue of transit rights through Pakistan, which New Delhi sees as key to its long-term agenda in Central Asia.

BLAKE